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ABSTRACT

The responsibility for ensuring that beginning teachers are competent to teach in the nation's classrooms should be that of teacher education institutions, according to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). Teacher education institutions must employ an assessment system that: (1) assesses specific competencies as early as possible in the candidate's program; (2) employs multiple assessment methods; and (3) monitors student progress continually. Decisions based on multiple assessments should reduce the number of high-risk students while retaining students for whom potential for success has been manifested in a variety of ways. The AACTE document "Educating a Profession: Profile of a Beginning Teacher" outlines competencies that should be assured by graduation from an approved teacher education program and provides a framework for a competency assessment program. Recommended times for assessing prospective teachers' competency include: (1) admission into the teacher education program; (2) enrollment for each subsequent semester; (3) admission into student teaching; (4) graduation from the program; and (5) first year of employment. The model described above is outlined in a chart that indicates what should be addressed, by whom, and by what methods at different points in the program. (JMK)

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Educating A Profession: Competency Assessment

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

April 1983

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES
FOR TEACHER EDUCATION
One Dupont Circle, Suite 610, Washington, D.C. 20036

Foreword

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) is committed to the preparation of teachers who have the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the diverse learning needs of the children and youth in our schools. AACTE believes that this means teacher educators must be concerned with the redesign of their programs as well as the development and application of appropriately rigorous standards and procedures.

The Association's commitment is represented in a series of position papers with their genesis in AACTE's bicentennial publication, *Educating a Profession. Profile of a Beginning Teacher* is the first in this series. It outlines the knowledge and skills that should be guaranteed by graduation from a teacher education program. It advocates a strong emphasis on general education, the disciplines underlying pedagogy, the teaching specialty content, and an enriched study and practice of pedagogy.

This statement, *Competency Assessment*, describes how and when the progress of prospective teachers should be assessed. Its recommendations cover teacher education from student entry into the program to graduation.

The third statement, *Extended Programs for Teacher Education*, addresses the length of time necessary for students to develop the competencies ensuring teacher effectiveness. To meet the outcomes described in *Profile of a Beginning Teacher*, this statement considers the need for extended programs. It addresses the issues surrounding a dramatic change in teacher education, gives examples of extended programs, and makes recommendations for implementing the more demanding and comprehensive program required to achieve the goals outlined in *Profile*.

Each of these three statements and other publications on teacher education are available from the AACTE Order Department, Suite 610, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Assessing the Competence of A Beginning Teacher

One of the characteristics which differentiates a profession from other occupations is the obligation of its members to establish entry criteria, to determine who meets those criteria satisfactorily, and to authorize those persons to practice the profession. The entry criteria for the beginning teacher must be based on a safe level of practice—safe in the sense that teachers have the personal and professional competencies and skills essential to ensure student learning.

According to recent opinion polls, a large segment of the public believes that schools can be improved by improving the quality of teachers. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) agrees. Throughout its history AACTE has provided leadership for improving preparation programs for educators. This paper on competency assessment builds on resolutions passed by the membership, recommending a model for schools, colleges and departments of education, which have the primary responsibility for improving the quality of beginning teachers. Strong teacher education programs are required to safeguard against the certification or licensure of persons not adequately prepared to educate the nation's youth.

Over the past few years national magazines and news media have reported that the public believes many teachers are unable to teach basic academic skills effectively. State Boards of Education, postsecondary commissions, legislatures and others have responded to this concern by mandating competency assessment programs for teachers. Beginning in 1977, Louisiana's legislature determined that any person applying for certification as a teacher "shall have passed satisfactorily an examination, which will include English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge in an area of specialization. . . ." Since that initial legislative action, 27 states have instituted legislative or state agency mandates to develop statewide competency tests for teachers, and nine other states are presently engaged in serious study and discussion.

However, the responsibility for ensuring that beginning teachers are competent to teach in the nation's classrooms should be that of teacher education institutions. They must employ an assessment system which provides relevant, timely and recurrent measures of the prospective teacher's progress toward becoming an effective teacher. The assessment system used should be appropriate to each institution's organization of its programs. Although variations in instruments and ap-

proaches are necessary and desirable, all assessment programs should meet the following principles:

- The assessment of a specific competency should occur as early as possible in the candidate's program. Students should be allowed to continue in a program only upon presenting evidence that a satisfactory standard has been achieved.
- Multiple assessment methods should be used to measure the essential competencies; limitations of various techniques must be compensated through the use of a variety of assessments of the essential characteristics.
- Monitoring of student progress should be continual, and advisors should conduct a formal review at least once a semester. A committee should review the candidate's progress at the point of admission to student teaching and at program completion.

Teacher education institutions have an obligation to establish entry, retention and exit criteria which measure the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of successful teachers. However, in addition to fulfilling this primary purpose, the assessment of competencies should serve the following purposes:

- To assist prospective teachers in self-evaluation of their aptitude for teaching;
- To assist faculty in identifying students for whom there is a high probability of success in the teacher education program;
- To provide timely diagnostic information in a fashion that can be used in developing appropriate programs, including remediation, where needed, and enrichment, when possible;
- To assist in the screening of students for retention in the program;
- To provide the information needed to determine whether a student should be recommended for the initial teaching certificate.

Even though a comprehensive assessment system and rigorous standards are necessary for high quality teacher education programs, institutions may have valid reasons for establishing flexible and special admissions categories. These are particularly important and appropriate with experimental programs and with efforts to increase the representation of students who otherwise would be excluded because of limited pre-college educational programs.

Multiple assessment methods should be used on a regular basis from entry to exit. These would include

the judgments and observations provided by teacher educators, academic specialty professors, school-based professionals, and others who have worked with and observed the prospective teacher. This process would be enhanced by the development of candidate dossiers or *portfolios*.

Lanier (1981) has described the content and use of portfolios as a key aspect of a reliable assessment model. She recommends that students initiate a portfolio before entering the teacher education program, including such items as:

- description of educational accomplishments from school, community and occupational activities;
- grades and test scores;
- samples of written work.

As students proceed through the preprofessional program, they should add records and anecdotes concerning collegiate activities and other accomplishments, and additional samples of written work.

At any time, but especially after admission to the teacher education program, additions to the portfolio should include rating scales, anecdotes, and more formal assessments provided by those who have taught and worked with the student. Examples of class projects other written work and personal observations also might be included.

Collecting a variety of relevant evidence in a portfolio will expand the basis for assessment beyond the typical transcript analysis and interview. It also will expedite a careful progress review by the adviser and others involved in admissions, retention, and graduation decisions. Although the portfolio approach is not essential to accomplish the goals of teacher education competency assessment, it is highly recommended. Throughout the professional program the portfolio provides an effective vehicle to engage students actively in professional acculturation. After graduation it provides the teacher with a permanent record of accomplishments and experiences.

The use of multiple assessment procedures eliminates a reliance on paper-and-pencil tests for establishing the competence of teacher education students. Institutions using this approach will need to develop an explicit process for combining different types of data, including the weight that is assigned to each factor considered. Decisions based on multiple assessments should reduce the number of high-risk students while retaining students for whom potential for success has been manifested in a variety of ways.

Model Teacher Education Assessment Program

The AACTE document, *Educating a Profession: Profile of a Beginning Teacher,* outlines the competencies that should be assured by graduation from an approved program and provides a framework for a competency assessment program. Although programs may be organized in different forms from entry into higher education to graduation, normal practice suggests a time sequence for assessments of specified competencies. A recommended sequence for assessing necessary competencies for beginning teachers is outlined below.

Admission to Teacher Education

Basic skill competencies should be developed at this point, and appropriate assessments should be made. These assessments should cover communication skills (both oral and written) and mathematics. Measures could include standardized or locally constructed tests including a writing sample, grades earned in relevant courses in liberal arts, interviews, and faculty recommendations.

Overall academic achievement should also be assessed for formative, not summative, purposes. Grade-point averages, faculty recommendations, and ACT or SAT scores could be used to provide the data for evaluation.

Enrollment for Each Subsequent Semester

Progress toward the achievement of competencies outlined in *Profile* should be reviewed by the candidate and the adviser. Progress could be measured by review of anecdotes by faculty and school-based teacher educators, rating scales, and grades. As recommended earlier, all of these data should be part of the student's portfolio.

Admission to Student Teaching

The decision to admit to student teaching should be made within a system broader than the student's advisor alone, such as a committee. The emphasis of the assessment should be assurance that the candidate is competent to teach under supervision. The portfolio might include rating scales, letters of recommendation, and anecdotes provided by faculty and school-based teacher educators. In addition, overall grade-point average and grades in professional courses should be reviewed.

Graduation from the Program

Assessments should cover general education, teaching field knowledge, professional knowledge and teaching skills. Information reviewed should include scores on tests spanning the knowledge and understanding components of general, teaching field and pro-

fessional courses; audio and video tapes of performance; grades in the three divisions of course work; and rating scales, anecdotes and recommendations from supervisors and cooperating teachers with emphasis on skills demonstrated during student teaching. Materials that have accumulated in the portfolio during the candidate's program assure that the candidate is competent to practice with a minimum of supervision.

First Year of Employment

Whether the initial certification (or license) is for one year or longer, teacher educators should continue to provide support and assessment for the first-year teacher. Particular attention should be given to the teacher's professional skills and knowledge of subject matter. Rating scales, anecdotes, and pupil assessments could be included.

Summary of Model Assessment Program

The assessment of beginning teacher competence is a complex and demanding task. Determining what is important enough to be assessed, the type of assessments, and coordination of all those who participate in the assessment process requires the active participation of all persons and agencies who bear any responsibility for the quality of teachers.

AACTE challenges teacher education institutions to assume the leadership role in the design and implementation of beginning teacher assessment programs. This process must include collaboration with the organized profession, school administrators, local and state policy-makers, and ultimately the communities in which teachers serve. This effort is essential to ensure further improvement in the quality of the nation's teachers.

The model described above is outlined in the following chart that indicates what should be addressed, by whom, and by what methods at different points in the program. The final column lists examples of options that institutions might provide to students who fail to meet criteria at various points in the assessment continuum.

When	Persons Involved	What Is Assessed	Evidence Considered	Options if Decision Negative
Admission to Teacher education	Teacher educators Liberal Arts professors School-based professionals	Basic skills —oral communication —written communication —mathematics Academic achievement Relevant experiences	Test scores —standardized —locally developed Writing samples Grades in high school and college	Strengthen preparation through additional coursework and projects with children/youth Delayed re-application Admission on probation
Each subsequent enrollment	Adviser	Progress toward program goals	Anecdotes from faculty and school-based professionals Rating scales Grades	Probationary enrollment Individual remedial programs
Admission to student teaching	Teacher educators School-based professionals	Competence to teach under supervision	Rating scales Anecdotes Recommendations from teacher educators and school-based professionals Grades	Delayed re-application Additional field placements Prescribed activities related to specific competencies
Graduation	Teacher educators School-based professionals	Profile of safe to practice characteristics —general education —teaching field knowledge —professional knowledge —skills of practice	Test scores —standardized —locally constructed Grade point average Grades in relevant courses Assessment of skills in student teaching Audio and video tapes	Additional student teaching Additional work to develop insufficient competencies
First year of practice	Teacher colleagues Teacher educators Local administrators	Professional skills and attitudes Subject matter knowledge	Anecdotes Rating scales Letters of recommendation	Observe master teachers Repeat supervised teaching Additional work on insufficient competencies

Afterword

In February 1981 AACTE's Board of Directors established a Task Force on Competency Assessment with the charge to prepare a position statement on the competency assessment of beginning teachers. The AACTE membership affirmed the work of this task force at the 1982 Annual Meeting, when they passed the following resolution:

> Whereas schools, colleges, and departments of education carry a large portion of the responsibility for the quality of the professional preparation of those who would become teachers, and
>
> Whereas the larger public has a right to expect quality assurances from those whom they hold accountable for the quality of teacher preparation programs, and
>
> Whereas those persons engaged in the preparation of teachers have the professional responsibility for recommending licensure only to those persons who have achieved a satisfactory, entry-level competence, and
>
> Whereas well-conceived programs of competency assessment provide for the necessary measures to permit professional recommendations for entry licensure to be made, therefore
>
> Be it resolved that:
> the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education supports and encourages the development of competency assessment programs in members' SCDFs, and
>
> Be it resolved that:
> assessment programs shall be designed to measure the attainment of appropriate professional skills, knowledge, and attitudes, and
>
> Be it resolved that:
> all programs shall be predicated upon clearly delineated criteria relating to those skills, knowledge, and attitudes, and
>
> Be it resolved that:
> no program shall be devised which places sole reliance upon a single measure or upon a single assessment technique, and
>
> Be it resolved that:
> SCDEs involve representatives from the professional educational community in the preparation of assessment programs.

Thus, *Competency Assessment* was developed by this task force in response to its charge from the Board of Directors and the 1982 resolution. This statement was adopted by the AACTE Board of Directors in February 1983.

References

Lanier, Judith E. "A Futuristic View for Assessing Competence in Teaching" in *Competency Assessment in Teacher Education*. Sharon G. Boardman and Michael J. Butler, eds. Washington, D.C.: AACTE and ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, 1981, pp. 89–97.

For Further Reading

Pugach, Marleen C. and Raths, James D. "Testing Teachers: Analysis and Recommendations" in *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. XXXIV (1), Jan.-Feb. 1983, pp. 37–43.

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